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Commissioner

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Statement on Emergency Plans for Child Care Programs in Georgia

Attribute to Bobby Cagle, Commissioner

Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning

“In response to the elementary school shooting in Newtown, Connecticut, the Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL) is reminding all of the state’s child care programs and Georgia’s Pre-K classes of DECAL’s required policies for handling emergencies. There are approximately 6,300 child care programs in Georgia and all of them are required to conduct fire drills monthly and regular drills for tornados and other emergency situations. Each child care program should have evacuation plans, including keeping children and staff in place and securing the location or off-site evacuations where children and staff would move to a safe designated area. As we saw in Newtown, teachers and providers are the first responders in emergencies like these and should be trained and supported in every way possible. Parents must be informed of the center’s emergency policies and procedures. Our child care consultants work with providers and teachers to ensure that emergency plans are up-to-date and recommend support materials for helping children and teachers cope with the aftermath of any emergency. At DECAL, our top priority is the health and safety of Georgia’s youngest learners. My thoughts and prayers continue to be with the families and children at Sandy Hook Elementary School and local officials there in Newtown.”

About DECAL

Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning is responsible for meeting the child care and early education needs of Georgia’s children and their families. It administers the nationally recognized Georgia’s Pre-K Program, licenses child care centers and home-based child care, administers federal nutrition programs, and manages voluntary quality enhancement programs.

The department also houses the Head Start State Collaboration Office, distributes federal funding to enhance the quality and availability of child care, and works collaboratively with Georgia child care resource and referral agencies and organizations throughout the state to enhance early care and education. For more information, go to www.decal.ga.gov.

Links to more information:

Ready Georgia
<http://www.ready.ga.gov/>

National Association of School Psychologists
http://www.nasponline.org/resources/crisis_safety/CaregiverTips.pdf

National Center for Infants, Toddlers and Families
<http://www.zerotothree.org/>

Autism Society
<http://www.autismspeaks.org/news/news-item/autism-speaks-responds-claims-linking-autism-spectrum-disorders-planned-violence>